Greetings from the Chair...

The AOTA Board of Directors Position Statement on Entry-Level Degree for the Occupational Therapist was issued on April 30th of this year. The statement is a response to the changing demands in higher education, healthcare, and the field of OT. The AOTA Board has responsibility for laying out strategic goals for the profession. The Board’s statement is explicit in its belief that the occupational therapy doctorate should be the single point of entry into the field by the year 2025. AOTA members can read the statement in its entirety at http://www.aota.org/AboutAOTA/Get-Involved/BOD/OTD-Statement.aspx.

The position statement is not a mandate; the only group that can effect this change is the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE). However, it is a strong indication of the direction of the profession. I believe the main impetus is in response to the need for occupational therapy to be among the many health professions who have taken this step and are now part of a decision-making force with the power to effect change in healthcare education, practice, and policy. Among many other leaders of our profession, it is my opinion that occupational therapy needs to be at the table with other doctoral level professions to lend our unique perspective on healthcare.

In anticipation of this change and to continue our reputation as a leader in the field, the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy had begun discussions about transitioning the current MSOT program to an OTD. After careful analysis and substantial soul-searching, and with full agreement from the faculty, we are now in the early stages of making this change. Our plan is to begin admitting a fraction of our enrollment into the entry-level OTD in the summer of 2016 while the majority of students will continue to enroll in the current MSOT. As more students apply for the OTD, the Department will gradually phase out the MSOT option until all students are being admitted to the OTD.

Having attended a number of open forums at ACOTE Program Directors meetings and having experienced the shift from bachelor’s to master’s entry level, I am aware of the range of opinions and emotional impact a decision like this can have. However, I am also excited to see occupational therapy reach a level of excellence for which such a degree can be considered for the entire profession. Without the knowledge base and research evidence our profession has and continues to generate, the idea of the doctorate as a single point of entry to the field would not be possible. As VCU OT alumni I hope you recognize the source of pride in our contributions to the field reflected in this potential change.

The faculty and staff of this Department cannot do this alone. The Department has always been able to count on our alumni and friends. You have assisted us in facing difficult challenges that have, in the long run, created even stronger occupational therapy programs and maintained the legacy of excellence of which you are such a critical part. Once again, I am turning to you to ask for your blessing and support. I welcome your feedback on this decision, and, as this plan unfolds, I will be glad to share details and discuss the new opportunities this degree presents. These are exciting, albeit challenging, times for our profession and our Department. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

Al Copolillo, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA
Associate Professor and Chair

Mindy Buckner (M.S., 1986) works for the Fairfax County Public Schools System. She developed [www.therapystreetforkids.com](http://www.therapystreetforkids.com), an informational website for OTs in and outside of schools systems.

Angela Carter (B.S., 1980) works at the Golden Living Center: Surry Community in Mt. Airy, NC.

Lisa Carter (M.S., 2002) lives in Christiansburg, VA, and is working in acute care and outpatient settings.

Annie [Ripper] Clark (M.S., 2001) has pursued a career in pediatrics, serving most recently as an Autism Coach and Trainer for the Colorado Department of Education in Denver. She continues to teach yoga and has adapted aspects of her practice to the Telluride Adaptive Ski Program for children with disabilities, especially autism. Her son Charlie was born in September, 2012 and is “doing great”.

Kelli [Showalter] Casey (M.S., 2005; OTD, 2008) and Liz Ridgeway (OTD, 2010) were interviewed in the November 4, 2013 issue of *OT Practice* about the grant-writing process as clinicians. The grants they discussed were prepared as part of their VCU OTD curriculum.

Erin [Wagenhorst] Conner (M.S., 2010) worked at a Riverside nursing home in Virginia Beach for two years after graduation where, as initially the sole OT, she helped build the OT program. She married on October 15, 2011, and the couple recently moved to the Washington, DC area. Erin has been working in acute care at Virginia Hospital Center where she enjoys the opportunity to work closely with a team of doctors, nurses and therapy staff to improve the early mobility of patients who are on ventilator support. She has been gratified by some of their “amazing successes”, with people initially on full ventilator support being able to go home with independent or near independent status.

Kathy Coppa (OTD, 2013) presented a poster at the American Occupational Therapy Association Conference in April, 2014.

Barbara Coverdale (B.S., 1970) currently works with Chesapeake Regional Home Care, but is looking forward to retirement in about 2 years. She has 3 adult children and 2 granddaughters.

Alicia Friedenreich (M.S., 2011) is doing SI at a private pediatric clinic. When seen at the AOTA conference, she reported that she hopes to travel to Europe for three months, then continue working in pediatrics for a nationwide travel OT company.

Kacie Hopkins (M.S., 2009) and husband Jeff relocated to Portland, OR this year.

Otis A. Johnson, Jr. (B.S., 1976) and his wife Lucille welcomed their third granddaughter (Tamera LeAnn) into the family on August 22, 2013. Otis and Lucille most recently returned from a two-week vacation which included time spent at Bryce and Zion National Parks, and the Grand Canyon, comprising the “Grand Circle”. They continue to enjoy retirement together, especially quality time with the grandkids.

Selena [Isabelle] Kampstra (M.S., 2001) got married on July 4, 2013. From a picture sent to the Department, it appears that a stunning dog (lab?) is part of her new family as well!

Dani Kastner (M.S., 2011) started working full-time at a Burke MFA SNF last year, and works prn for Genesis. Dani was accepted to MFA’s Continuing Education Committee to select course offerings for 2015 with the leadership of Jaime Smiley (M.S., 2001). Dani has begun supervising Level II Fieldwork students and says she really empathizes with Jayne now! This Spring she was also busy serving on the University of Virginia’s Alumni Service Committee and training for a half marathon.

Susan Lin (M.S., 1991) received the 2013 Boston University Alumni Award. She served as a merit
reviewer for the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) last year, and continue in her position as Director of Research of the American Occupational Therapy Association.

**Cathy Linkous** lives in Princeton, WV and works as a county school systems OT.

**William McGrath (M.S., 1999)** lives in Silver Spring, MD and works for the Montgomery County schools system. He was at the American Occupational Therapy Association conference in 2014 to present a paper, and also reports that he has two boys.

**John Moossa (M.S., 2013)** accepted a position with Aegis Therapies to work at a SNF in Petersburg, VA, after successfully passing the NBCOT exam.

**Linda Olson (SAHP Ph.D., 2011)** was featured in a humorous, musical YouTube video made by the Class of 2015 at Rush University for OT Month in April, 2014.

**Vanessa Pralle (M.S., 2013)** celebrated passing the NBCOT exam in February, 2014 by spending a week in Nevada, “hanging out with family”, mountain biking and enjoying the beautiful desert scenery.

**Tammie [Armstead] Pulliam (B.S., 1987)** lives in Richmond, VA and is working as a travel OT.

**Michelle [Bouldanger] Thompson (M.S., 1988)** has worked as an OT specializing in early intervention, school-based therapy, pediatrics, and home health for the past 25 years. She’s currently working with children aged 2-22 years at Richmond Public Schools. She loves collaborating with an interdisciplinary team and says her goal is “to assist individuals and families to find maximum independence and ability so they can learn, play, enjoy and LIVE life!” She’s been a Girl Scout leader for over ten years and has been married since 1989. She and her husband have 3 “wonderful” children, a 20 year old son and 16-year-old boy/girl twins.

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**Traveling OT Lip Gloss in Ghana!**

Dr. Stacey Reynolds
Reba Law Anderson, Ph.D., OTR/L, FAOTA (RPI, 1959) who died on November 13, 2013 and who was recognized in the February 14, 2014 issue of *OT Practice* for her academic and professional leadership. Dr. Anderson, born in Lynchburg, VA in 1938, went on to complete Masters (1970) and doctoral (1984) degrees in anthropology at the University of Florida, after leaving RPI. She served for two years with the U.S. Special Forces in Verdun, France, then taught OT at the University of Miami. Her academic career continued at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Washington State University in Fort Collins, and finally at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Ft Lauderdale, FL. She implemented both the Masters and doctoral programs at NSU, and directed the doctoral program. She chaired the department until her retirement in 2001 as Professor Emeritus. Dr. Anderson and colleague, Suze Dudley founded and co-chaired the Great Southern Occupational Therapy Conference, held from 1983-2000. Her leadership was recognized by AOTA with a 2001 Award of Merit and induction as a Fellow in 1985. In addition to her impressive professional achievements, she was also an accomplished pianist and dulcimer musician.

It is with great sadness that we relay the death of Guy Perez. Guy was a graduate of the 1996 VCU OT Master’s program. After working as a practitioner in several areas of OT, he moved into management, directing clinical services at both a private and public facility. He brought an enthusiasm to his work that left an indelible mark on his coworkers and clients, who often commented that he brought out the best in those around him. Guy lived with colon cancer for four and a half years. He was a dedicated father and husband, and an avid athlete. Guy continued to work, travel with his family, compete and coach youth soccer through the vast majority of his illness despite major surgeries and grueling treatments. A youth soccer field was dedicated in his honor shortly before his death. At the dedication ceremony, Guy was surrounded by family, friends and scores of young athletes wearing “Team Guy” jerseys. His determination continues to be an inspiration to those fortunate enough to have known him.

Those wishing to make donations in Guy’s memory may do so to one of these charities:

Richmond Kickers RVA Access Program: 2001 Maywill Street, 203, Richmond, Virginia 2330
LiveStrong Foundation: LiveStrong.org
Featured Faculty Researcher: Shelly J. Lane, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

VCU OT professor Dr. Shelly Lane was recently awarded a $20,000 Community Engagement grant from the VCU Division on Community Engagement. Lane will serve as the PI on the project entitled: Expanding Trauma-informed Intervention for Preschoolers: An Interdisciplinary Best-practice Approach. The goals of the project include 1) implementing an inter-disciplinary trauma-informed and sensory integration based assessment and intervention program with children at Circle Center Preschool (CPP) and their caregivers, and 2) developing partnership between CPP, VCU Social Work, and VCU Occupational Therapy to educate emerging professionals. CCP is a specialty preschool program focused on meeting the needs of young children who have experienced some form of abuse, neglect, maltreatment or other trauma.

Dr. Lane was also a speaker at this year’s International Meeting For Autism Research (IMFAR) where she presented her work with former VCU doctoral student Dr. Teal Benevides. The research project, entitled Access to Therapy for Children with Autism, examined population-based differences in need for and access to therapy services in children with autism spectrum disorders as compared to children with other special healthcare needs (CSHCN) across two waves of data available in the National Survey for Children with Special Health Care Needs (NS-CSHCN). Dr. Lane and Dr. Stacey Reynolds (VCU Associate Professor) also presented their research on the effects of deep pressure stimulation on physiological arousal at the IMFAR Technology Demonstration event. Their physiological study was one only a handful featured by representatives from CNN Medical news as an emerging evidence based practice.

While busy editing the third edition of the Sensory Integration Theory and Practice text (Lane & Bundy Eds.), Dr. Lane has also contributed to three peer-review publications. Two articles on motor planning will appear in this year’s American Journal of Occupational Therapy, while a review article on cardiac autonomic measures for children with autism was accepted for publication by the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disabilities.
Featured Student Researcher: Kate Barlow, OTR/L, OTD(C)

VCU OTD candidate Kate Barlow recently returned from Ghana, West Africa where she collected research data for her capstone project. The qualitative research study is being conducted as the first step in creating a culturally sensitive evaluation tool for assessing child development in the Ghanaian population. Through analysis of her in-depth interviews with 28 Ghanaian families, Barlow hopes to develop a better understanding of when children in Ghana achieve universally standard milestones (e.g. first steps, first words and transition to solid food) and what more culturally specific factors should be accounted for on assessments used in the Ghanaian culture. Importantly, these interviews will also provide new information about what caregivers value most about their child’s development, which milestones are valued the most in that culture, and how a child is viewed that does not meet these milestones. During the trip Barlow was also able to connect with Ellen Adomako and Gifty Gyamah Nyante, rehabilitation faculty at the University of Ghana, who will be involved in subsequent phases of the project. Barlow’s faculty advisor is Dr. Stacey Reynolds who leads an annual study abroad course in Ghana.
Students and faculty from the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy recently returned from a two week study-abroad course in Ghana, West Africa. The course is an annual offering led by Dr. Stacey Reynolds, and was co-directed this year by Carole Ivey and Rick Thornton. Twelve master’s level students and one doctoral student participated this year, along with Stacey and Carole’s 12 year old sons Daniel and Kevin. The group of 18 spent time both in the Accra and Volta regions of Ghana working with children at local schools and orphanages. During the trip the team was able to connect with students and faculty at the newly formed occupational therapy program at the University of Ghana. The students from both programs engaged in a problem-based learning session led by Dr. Ivey at the New Horizon’s Special School in Accra.

This is the department’s third trip to Ghana (the 5th for Reynolds), and faculty hope to continue the course as a way to support and learn about disability culture in developing countries. With a specific focus on pediatrics, Reynolds and Ivey hope to work with the government of Ghana to develop a system for early identification and early intervention for children with disabilities.
OTD Class of 2013 present a $1000 donation to the Dragas fund for use in the SPASE lab.
VCU’s Department of Occupational Therapy welcomed 42 new MSOT students on June 1, 2014. The class is made up of 6 men and 36 women who range in age from 21 to 49 years. Twenty-seven (64%) are Virginia residents, and 15 hail from California, New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, North Carolina, New Jersey, Colorado, Idaho, Ohio, West Virginia, and Connecticut. This year a little over 28% (12 members) of the class completed their bachelor’s degrees at two Virginia schools, Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia. Other Virginia schools attended by members of this class include, Virginia Commonwealth, University of James Madison, University of Mary Washington, Eastern Mennonite University, and George Mason University. Out of state schools include Appalachian State, BYU-Idaho, College of Charleston, CUNY-Hunter College, Elon, Grove City, Humbolt State, Messiah College, Ohio State, Purdue University, Tufts University, University of Alabama Birmingham, UCLA, University of Iowa, University of Maine, University of Maryland, University of Vermont, and Winthrop. The students’ majors range widely and include Biology, Business, Economics, Environmental Studies, General Studies, Health Sciences, Interdisciplinary Studies, Kinesiology, Nutrition, Political Science, Psychobiology, Religion, Social Work/Counseling, Sociology, Theater/Cinema and Others. Thirty-one% of the class were Psychology majors. This very talented group of 42 students was selected from over 429 qualified applications. They bring a wealth of wonderful travel, volunteer, and work experiences to their class.

They began their summer with an intensive semester course orienting them to the profession of OT in 13 short days. That was followed by six weeks of immersion in Functional Human Anatomy. After a very busy summer they will be ready to settle into a traditionally paced fall semester of foundational coursework in group work, development, kinesiology, medical lectures and theory. Welcome VCU MSOT Class of 2016!
On January 3, 2014, the graduating Class of 2014 students, local alumni, and OT faculty and staff gathered in the Theatre Row Building for the 10th Annual Connections event. This celebration commemorates students’ transition from OT school to their new status as alumni of the Department, School of Allied Health Professions (SAHP), and University. Thanks to generous support from the Medical College of Virginia Alumni Association (MCVAA), the event was truly festive, with an array of refreshments, and School and University-themed door prizes wrapped in gold and black paper. The SAHP Dean’s office contributed tote bags for all attendees to take home as useful party favors. Amy Gray, MCVAA’s Director of Student and Young Alumni Engagement spoke eloquently of the need for newly-minted alumni to maintain their ties with one another and to the place where they received their professional education to become OTs. As articulated by a former OT alumna:

There is something between us that words can’t define
Existing in silence and outside of time
Though we just might forget
In the passing of days
There’s still a connection
That won’t slip away
We’re connected through love
We’re connected through life
We’re connected through Stories and tears in the night
We’re connected through Memories, connected through friends
Feel deep the connection
Made strong once again
(Sarah Hopkins, M.S., 1986)

We hope this event helped inspire that sense of continuity in the Class of 2014. And…we would love to hear what you’ve been up to since then, personally and professionally!

Support from alumni is greatly appreciated and will continue to be paramount to our students, faculty and staff. We appreciate what you do for us and look forward to your continued participation and unwavering support in these very difficult economic times. The Department has created the Occupational Therapy Priority Fund to help sustain academic programs, faculty and student development, and equipment and technology needs. These funds help bridge the gap between appropriated state support and what is additionally needed when providing the very best educational experience.

In addition to the Priority Fund, we continue to need Student Scholarship support. Our students continue to receive extensive clinical training and play an active role in the Department, thanks to an increased amount of service learning opportunities. Many students are choosing occupational therapy as a second career. Student scholarship support is always needed, especially now more than ever because of the current economic situation.

We hope you will consider making a financial commitment to the Department through a gift that meets your philanthropic desires. All gifts make a difference in the lives of our students and our profession.
I am pleased to support the VCU Department of Occupational Therapy

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